2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
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is determined by matrilineal descent, or even in some cases by patrilineal ties, as we shall see. So that we have to deal with a primary principle of local association—matrilocal marriage and a number of secondary ones.

The Primary Group—the Matrilocal Extended Family.[1]

● 596 842 [541]

By the rule of matrilocal marriage a man goes to live at his wife's village and works there for his father-in-law for a number of years. Thus, the aim of each man is to have as many daughters as possible since their marriage makes him head of a strong economic unit composed of his daughters, his sons-in-law, and their children. The more daughters a Bemba has the more fortunate he is considered to be. His sons leave him to go and live in their father-in-law's villages and become economically dependent on their wives' families. They move from home at betrothal (i.e. about 12 to 14 years) and remain in the village into which they have married until two or three children have been born. Even if they remove their families home later in married life it is more likely that they will go to their maternal grandfather or maternal uncle, than to their father. But a man's daughters, when they marry, build huts near his own, and if their husbands settle down happily in their wives' community, they remain there more or less permanently and form the backbone of their father-in-law's village, if he is a headman. Hence the Bemba proverb, 'A man is a granary on the veranda (i.e. a man acknowledging economic obligations but living far off) and a daughter is a granary by the door-way (i.e. a source of economic support near at hand).'[2]

596 603

Besides the advantage of the presence of his sons-in-law, a Bemba father looks forward to the arrival of grandchildren. With these he is on very intimate terms. As children they sleep in his hut and he and the grandmother play an important part in their education. In early married life the granddaughters will probably remain in his village if their parents are still resident there, and grandchildren of both sexes are welcome to return there later in life whenever they please. The children of a man's daughters are considered a very special asset, whereas the children of his sons, though treated with equal affection, usually live elsewhere. To

[1] Matrilocal marriage is still practised but its duration is gradually decreasing.
[2] *Mwaume butala pa lukungu: mwanakashi butala pa mwinshi.*

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have sons, he says is 'to throw away the seed' (*ukupose mbuto*), but to have daughters is to 'set up a local group' (*ukusange cifulo*).

In a new village there will probably be one matrilocal family group of the type described, i.e. a headman and his married daughters and their husbands and possibly one or two married granddaughters. But when the community has been in existence for a long time, or the headmanship has passed to one or two men in succession, there may be three or four of these matrilocal extended families composed of the daughters of contemporaries of the headman, either men who originally came from another village to marry one of his near relatives and have chosen to live with him all their married lives,[1] or contemporaries of the last headman who have preferred to remain living with his heir. These heads of matrilocal family groups are the most influential members of the community and are known as the 'great ones' of the village (*bakalamba*), and the household of a man who has several married daughters living under his care is known as a 'big house' (*iyanda ikalamba*). Of the headman of one village who had seven married daughters and their husbands and children—some of the latter also married—living with him, natives exclaimed with rapture: 'Truly that is a big house! My word! That is luck indeed!'[2]

Thus, the chief principle of local association in Bemba society is a man's legal right to the services of his son-in-law. The rule of residence results directly from the type of marriage contract. Among a number of other Bantu peoples, the transfer of material goods, such as cattle, is the essential element of the marriage transaction, and determines the relationship between the groups so united throughout the married life of the couple concerned. But among the Bemba, the marriage payment is insignificant, or was so until the present day. It consisted of a small betrothal present (*ntalamo*) such as a bracelet, a couple of bark-cloths given by the bridegroom to his father-in-law at the initiation of the girl (*fye cisungu*), and at the time of the marriage ceremony (*mpango*), these latter now being replaced by cloth, or a few

[1] This was apparently quite common in the old days, though rare now. In most villages one or two old men are described as having 'come here to marry' and in one village (Kacienja, near Shiwa Dandu 1931 and 1934) a man had actually become headman of his wife's village, assuming authority over her relatives, although he was of course unable to officiate at ceremonies to the ancestral spirits of the community, which office he delegated to a member of his wife's lineage group. [2] *Iyanda ikalamba iena! Mwandi! Te kukyuka!*

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in Chap. X shows a number of such cross-cousin marriages uniting the children of brothers and sisters together and the proportion of marriages of this type in Bemba society is 30 per cent. according to my figures.

Hence in any Bemba village it is common to find the headman, and the other elders of the community, responsible for the welfare of the two types of group—a primary matrilocal extended family composed of a man's wife, his daughters and their husbands, his granddaughters and their husbands, and possibly his wife's mother, and a secondary matrilineal descent group composed of a widowed or deserted sister and her children married or unmarried, or her grandchildren. In each case his duties may extend to relatives in the classificatory degree if these are left destitute, or to kinsfolk of the headman's predecessor in the same degree, i.e. mother, sister, daughter. His relationship to the members of the two groups may be represented thus and his pattern of behaviour to each entirely different:

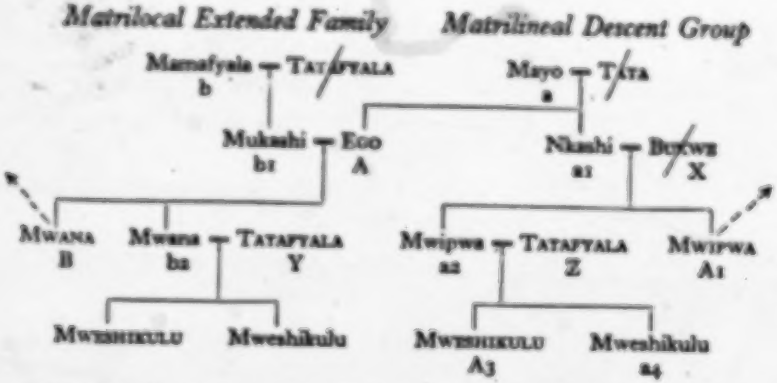

Diagram: N.B. Men represented by capital letters; women by small type; a line through a name represents death; an arrow means residence in another community. A is here head of:

(a) his own matrilocal extended family in which his daughter b2 marries and remains in his village and his son B marries elsewhere. He is also supporting his widowed mother-in-law (b);

(b) the female relatives of his matrilineal descent group: his mother a, his sister a1, whose husband X is dead and whose daughter a2 is married in the village, while her son A1 has married outside. By cross-cousin marriages between A1 and b2 or B and a2 these two men would have remained in the village.

Mayo = my mother
Mukashi = my wife
Tata = my father
Bukwe = my brother-in-law or in-law generally

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Nkashi = my sister
Mweshikulu = my grandchild
Tatafyala = my son-in-law, father-in-law, maternal niece's husband
Mamafyala = my mother-in-law
Umwipwa = my maternal niece or nephew
Umwana = my son or daughter

Additional Households.

Besides the relatives for whom he has the strongest responsibility, there are a number of other kinsfolk who may join a headman and accept his authority. These are, roughly speaking, of two types: (*a*) destitute persons, chiefly women, who want his support, or (*b*) relatives of either sex who are not necessarily in poor circumstances, but who may be attracted by an elder relative's personal popularity or rank to settle with him. These latter may include young men whose normal male guardian is dead, or middle-aged men who want to settle somewhere temporarily, until their own personal following has become big enough for them to risk setting up a community of their own. These additional households may include in the first category, widows of the headman's *nalume*, whom he is bound to inherit or else support; poor relations of his wife, or women who claim the term of grandmother, mother, sister, cross-cousin, or granddaughter but are only distantly related. The second group may consist of male relatives of the matrilineal descent group—younger brothers, maternal nephews, cross-cousins, or grandsons—who have chosen to return to live with him after their period of matrilocal marriage is at an end, or, if the headman is a man of high position, his own sons—almost invariably the case at the court of a chief where the 'sons of the chief' (*bana bamfumu*) have a regularly established position at the capital, bring their wives to live with them, and rival the maternal nephews, the rightful heirs, for favours. Nowadays, clerks earning good money in European employment are similarly able to attract their sons to settle with them, and the statement *aya kuli wishi* ('he has gone to his father') or even *atemwa kuli wishi* ('he likes his father') may cause some comment, but no surprise at the present day. Thus, the presence of the father-son grouping in a Bemba village occurs, however infrequently, although such an association seems to run directly counter to the rules of legal affiliation. Grandsons either through the daughter or through the son also tend to join a grandfather of rank or position.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1956
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593 With this system of matrilineal descent the ties between a
604 woman and her brother are very close. The woman produces children who are the heirs of her brothers. The man is the natural guardian of his sisters' children, and he must be consulted about his uterine niece's marriage and could claim the right to marry her where he pleased. He could protect her after her marriage if he wished to do so. The mother's brother could generally claim possession of his sister's children if her marriage broke down. In
[567] the old days he could give one of the children as a slave or a blood-wite to the head of a family to whom he or one of the lineage group owed reparation. He could command the services of his sister's son and bid him follow him to war. The woman in her turn could com-
[789] mand the services of her brother's daughter and was thought to be able to bless or curse the fertility of the latter's marriage. Brother and sister can take each other's property and behave in a free and easy way with each other.

591 Marriage is uxorilocal among the Bemba and among kindred
171 tribes such as the Bisa, Lala, Lamba, Cewa, and Kaonde which
●596 also perform a kind of chisungu ceremony. A young man who marries goes to live in his wife's village where he builds himself a hut and becomes a member of her extended family. This is a domestic and economic unit. The sons-in-law work together under
[606] the father-in-law and the daughters with their mother. The man gives service to his father-in-law rather than cattle or other goods as in most other Bantu societies. A young couple has no cooking fire of its own to begin with. The girl cooks with her mother and sends food to her husband at the man's shelter, where he sits with his friends. At first the couple have no granary of their own and no gardens and when they acquire the latter, later in their married life, the gardens are cleared near those of the rest of the extended family group.

596 As a family group of this kind grows in size, its head often
621 chooses to separate from the old village and to start a new one of his own. Hence the desire of a Bemba to have many daughters in order to be able 'to found a house'.

591 After the marriage has been established, and children have been born to the union, it remains a question for individual decision whether the husband is given permission to remove his

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
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wife to the village of his own matrilineal relatives or whether he will remain for ever with his wife's relatives. In the old days, when conditions of life were more precarious, there is evidence that fathers were unwilling to let their daughters go away from home during times of war and raiding. When I was in Lubemba a man was allowed to remove his wife to his own village if he had produced children by her and shown himself to be a steady fellow. The decision seemed to depend on the relative personality and status of father-in-law and son-in-law. As I have shown elsewhere,[1] a chief was above the tribal rule and could marry virilocally, as could a polygamist in the case of a second wife. A man of rank or of good behaviour could certainly remove his wife within a few years, as could a man called to succeed to his maternal uncle's position, but during the year of my visit there were still men who had remained as 'strangers' in their wife's villages all their married life.

It will be seen at once that the pivotal relationships of the extended family, which is the basic residential unit in Bemba society, are the ties between a mother and her daughters. It is the women who attract the husbands who increase the community and it is they who usually remain in charge of the children when the young fathers go away to work in the mines. In fact a group of sisters living with their mother become so attached to each other and their joint way of life that one of them will sometimes refuse to follow her husband to the latter's village when he wants to move, and her marriage may then break up.

It will be seen, too, that there are several sources of tension in this type of kinship system. First the ties of loyalty which bind a man to his matrilineal descent group clash to a certain extent with the obligations he owes to his local group, his wife's extended family. At marriage he is separated from the very relatives with whom he is legally identified, and from the mother's brother to whose position he will ultimately succeed. He is in a galling position in many ways. He lives in a community based on kinship traced through women and he is economically dependent on his wife's people and working under their orders. Sometimes the bride-

[1] 'Some Types of Family Structure among the Central Bantu', in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, edited by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, 1950.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
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596 591 groom finds the early years of married life so irksome that the union breaks up and he returns to his own home. Bemba recognize the difficult situation of the son-in-law and make jokes at the expense of the young bridegroom alone in his wife's village without kinsmen to support him. On the other hand, if the husband can live through these first years and the marriage proves itself stable, he can himself acquire status and prestige as head of his own extended family with sons-in-law working for him, whether he moves to one of his own relative's villages or stays where he is.

596 604 The second source of conflict is, of course, that between the father and the mother's brother for the control of the former's children and this is a tension inherent in the matrilineal system. The Bemba father is head of his own extended family and is the chief authority in his children's lives during their early years. He has rights over his daughters' marriage payments, and over the labour of his sons-in-law; his sons may decide to live with him, if he is a man of rank and popularity. Nevertheless the mother's brother is the legal guardian of the children, as we have seen, and can command his uterine nephews' services and can control the marriages of his uterine nieces if he pleases.

591 The Bemba girl is also in a position of conflict when she marries. She is happy with her mother and sisters in a village to which she belongs, but her husband may demand to take her, after a few years of married life, to some other village where his own relatives live. These difficulties are overcome if the husband marries within [582] the village and there are various forms of preferential marriage, with the daughter of the father's sister for instance, which do not involve the moving of the girl from her mother's home.

596 In the case of a successful marriage which has endured for a number of years and has resulted in the birth of several daughters both the man and the woman reach an advantageous position. The father is head of an extended family and whether he lives in his wife's village, in his mother's brother's village, or has managed to start a small community of his own, he is in a position of power and authority. The woman in her turn, wherever she lives, has a group of closely related households co-operating with her. If she remains in her own village her married sisters will be near her; if she moves to her husband's village her own married daughters will

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
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probably follow her there. Thus, though the difficulties of achieving a stable marriage in Lubemba are great the rewards for achieving such a union are high. 596

THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT

A traditional Bemba marriage was contracted by gradual steps, 583
a series of stages, generally marked by ritual, by which a young man became incorporated in his wife's family by dint of joint residence and by exchange of his services for food and general support from his relatives-in-law. To reach a stable Bemba marriage the relationship between the two groups had to reach a fine equilibrium based on sentiment, shared economic tasks and an accepted division of rights over the children of the union. It had always something of the trial and error nature about it, during the first years of married life, and it still had these characteristics in 1931.

To contract a marriage a Bemba bridegroom makes a series of small payments to his relatives-in-law and does several years' work for his wife's father or mother. In return his wife's parents feed him entirely for a year or two, and give him substantial support for a larger period. To European eyes the husband gets the worst of the bargain since the labour he gives his father-in-law can never be returned in case of divorce; but Bemba consider the hospitality of the bride's family and the many presents of 'respect' they offer the bridegroom as a substantial contribution. I have seen a young man leave his tribe because he thought his mother-in-law was 'stingy' and lacking in respect. It is the women of the family who are responsible for honouring the son-in-law in this way. The husband gives a betrothal present (*nsalamo*), which is a token such as a copper bangle or, nowadays, a small coin. The main payment is the *mpango* which consisted formerly of two or three bark-cloths but is now a sum of money, which averaged 8/- on 72 marriages I recorded in 1934. The *mpango* is given to the parents during the preliminary negotiations, or later, to legitimize a union not contracted formally. The bridegroom also used to pay money to his father or mother-in-law for organizing his bride's chisungu

595 Polygynous marriages occur throughout this area and the second marriage of a man is usually virilocal instead of uxorilocal. Save for chiefs, however, the polygynous household is not a recognised social unit as it is amongst the patrilineal southern and eastern Bantu. Where commoners marry two or more women, the second or third wife often lives in a different part of the village. Among chiefs, however, the wives live in huts fenced round by a common stockade. Nowadays polygyny is not generally practised by commoners, though chiefs may have as many as several dozen wives. A sample of 209 Bemba marriages in the Chinsali district in 1939 showed 68% to be monogamously married, while an earlier sample showed 59%.(1) Similar figures are not available for the other tribes in the area.

582 Marriage within the Bemba clan is not permitted and Bemba themselves say they are prohibited also from marrying within their father's clan. This is not strictly true, since the preferential marriages of the Bemba include cross-cousins on both the father's and the mother's side. A further preferential marriage is that between a man and the classificatory grand-daughter. From 144 marriages in 6 villages, 49% were between cross-cousins and a further 7% with grand-daughters.(2) A chief, but not a commoner, may marry the daughter of a son. A woman has rights over her brother's daughter, whom she may demand as an additional wife for her husband, or as a substitute, should she herself be tired of her partner and wish to return to live with her brother.

Inter-tribal marriages appear to be common today but formerly marriage was not allowed between members of tribes which believed that they shared a common origin. Gouldsbury, for instance, states that marriage was forbidden between the Bemba and the Northern Alungu, Senga and Aushi, but was permitted with the Southern Alungu, Tabwa, Lunda, Lamba, Bisa and Chishinga.

Divorce

586 Divorce was and is common amongst the Bemba, particularly in the early years of married life when the union is considered in some respects to be on trial. Where divorce occurs the children belong to the mother and her matrilineage, and no return is made for the service of the son-in-law or his token presents. Unga divorce rates, resulting from the absence of husbands from home, are extremely low according to Brelsford.(3) Formerly divorce seems to have been a family affair among the Unga, action being taken by the family of the injured party. Data for other tribes in this group are not available. Throughout this area main grounds for divorce appear to be the following: sterility, adultery, failure to perform domestic duties, desertion on the part of the woman; impotence, ill-treatment and prolonged desertion on the part of the man.

FAMILY AND FAMILY EXTENSION

● 596 Among the Bemba the basic domestic unit is not usually the individual household composed of a man, his wife and young children, but a group of related households consisting of a middle-aged or old man and his wife, their married daughters and the latters' husbands and children. A young Bemba

(1) Richards, 8, 1940, Table A. (2) Richards, 8, 1940.
(3) Brelsford, 2, 1949, p.103.

596 girl has no fire-place of her own when she marries, and remains a member of her mother's cooking-group, even as a young married woman. This extended family group is not a joint household in the sense of a compound surrounded by a wall, or a homestead or kraal separated from other houses by some form of hedge, but a group of households which cooperate even though the huts in which they live may be scattered through the village. When a married man 593 with children wins the right to remove his family to his own village, it is a unit of this kind which usually moves with him. Richards describes the delight of a Bemba man in the birth of daughters who will attract sons to 604 the village and build up a group of this kind. In fact, although a woman's children belong to her clan and must submit ultimately to the authority of 611 her brother, who could, in the old days, sell them into slavery, the father nevertheless acquires considerable authority over his wife and children in a stable marriage. When the children are small they obey him; when the daughters marry they stay at first under his rule; and even the sons who go elsewhere to marry, remember their father, give him presents and may even join him later in preference to living with their mother's brother. Children also take their father's name, although they belong to their mother's clan, and some "sons of the chief" are given minor chieftainships as well as the royal princes - the sisters' sons of the chief. Richards emphasizes the extent to which authority is divided between the father and the mother's brother in this area, with a tendency for the power of the father to increase under modern conditions.(1)

604 Richards states that the avunculate is stronger at the present day among the Bisa. It is not quite clear whether this is a structural difference or due to the fact that the Bisa are, on the whole, less in contact with European civilisation. Little is known of this aspect of kinship among the Aushi and Unga. There seems, however, to be a marked contrast between the position of the father and mother's brother among the Bemba and among the Cewa and Yao to the east, where the avunculate is again much more strongly developed and there seems to be some form of corporate matrilinage.(2)

596 It will be seen that as regards residence and common activities the effective kinship unit is not one based on unilineal descent, as is common among the patrilineal, patrilocal Bantu, but a loosely organised group of kinsfolk composed of near relatives on both sides of the family. The Bemba call this group a *lupwa*.

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

601 The bilateral character of Bemba kinship ties is reflected in the system of nomenclature. It will be found that in one's own generation, where there is the maximum distinction in terminology, a man uses the term *munyinane* for his own brothers and for parallel cousins, male and female, on his father's and his mother's side. Only his own sister is called by a special term, *nkushi*. A woman in the same way uses the sibling term for her own sister and for her parallel cousins, male and female, but uses a special term, *ndume*, for her own brother. No marriage is possible between a man and any woman who is a *munyina* on the maternal or paternal side. A special term *mujyalu* is used by men and women for their cross-cousins, i.e. either for the father's

(1) Richards, 1, 1934 and 9, 1950. (2) Tew, 1950, pp.11, 43.